

Spectrum

Falcons fly in to say thanks

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Signal Staff

Several Atlanta Falcons players and cheerleaders flew in to Fort Gordon Sept. 9 to show their appreciation to Soldiers for their service and to commemorate 9-11. They arrived from Gainesville on UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters courtesy of the “Falcons,” also known as, A Company, 1-171st Aviation Regiment of the Georgia Army National Guard. Upon landing the entourage was whisked away on a bus to Signal Towers where the group shared lunch with about 25 recently redeployed Soldiers and Sailors. They also met briefly with Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Foley, U.S. Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon commanding general.

“Most of the guys and

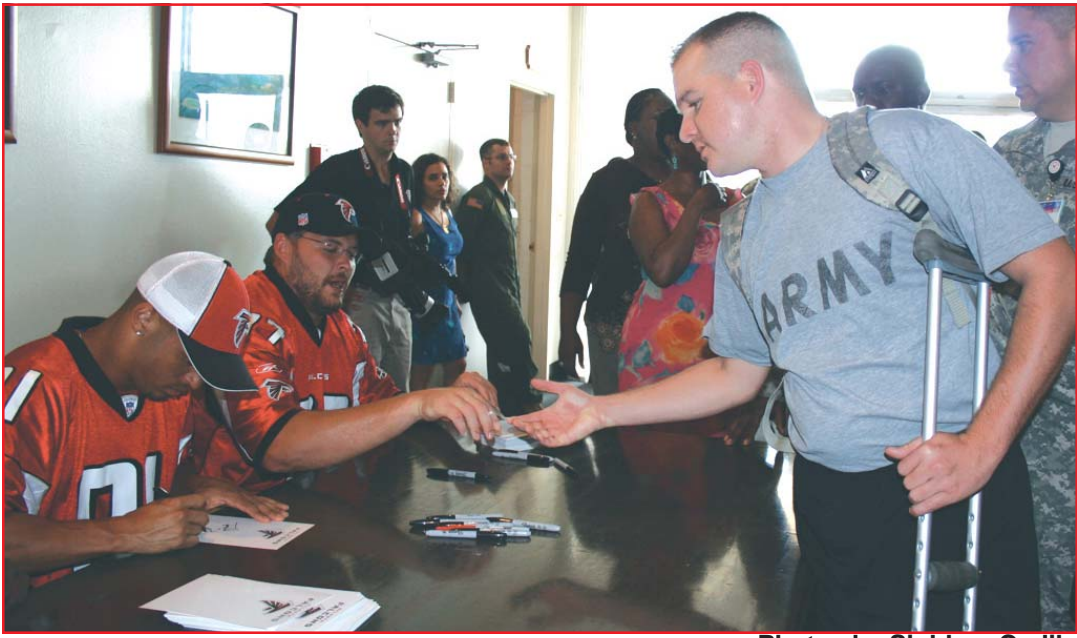
gals downstairs, they joined after 9-11. They don’t have to be here, they don’t get paid very much... and they don’t ask for much. It means something when you guys fly to Augusta, Georgia and it means something when you reach out and say thanks. That’s all they’re looking for...then they’re back in action,” said Foley. One Soldier, Sgt. Joshua Byers, 202nd Military Intelligence who has been back for about 9 months said, “I was impressed when they came in, of course we clapped when they came in but then they had us sit down and they came by and shook all of our hands. Usually with celebrities you’d go around and shake their hands so... I was impressed with the way they handled themselves and the way they put themselves out in front of us.” Byers who is originally from Gainesville, Ga., and graduated from Shorter College in Rome, Ga., also said, “I am very appreciative, they were all thankful for our service.”

“It was nice for us because we cheer these guys on and they came out to thank us for protecting them and the country.”

After lunch the players and cheerleaders went to make a presentation at Alexander Hall where tight end Ben Hartsock (former Indiana Colt and Ohio Buckeye) gave a motivational speech about his trip to Afghanistan during last year’s Superbowl. After the meet and greet where the players signed autographs and posed for pictures Hartsock said, “This is truly an opportunity for us to thank [the Soldiers] for their service. They hang it on the line each and every day affording us the freedoms that we have every day.” During the Falcons home opener Sept. 7 (Atlanta defeated Detroit, 34-21) Soldiers from Fort Gordon served on the flag crew to unfurl the 40-yard long Falcons flag moments before the kickoff. The Falcons all take turns to spend their Tuesdays (their only day off) out in the community participating in various outreach activities.



UH-60 Black Hawk Helicopters take off from Barton Field.

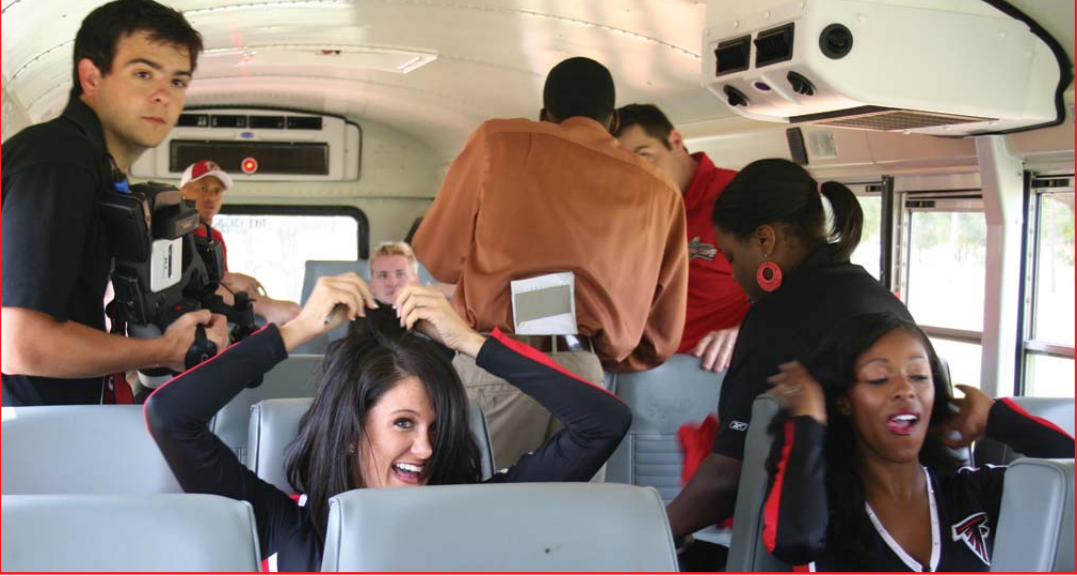


Photos by Siobhan Carlile

Number 77, Tyson Clabo reaches out to Staff Sgt. Craig Showers, C Co. Warrior Transition Battalion, as he moves through the autograph line.



(Left) Falcons Tyson Clabo and Alex Stepanovich compare height to Pfc. Chris Beaudette, 67th Signal Battalion, who stands at 6 feet 11 inches.



(Left) Falcon intern Colt Berry looks for a possible photographic moment.



Sgt. Ashly Hernandez, 67th Signal Battalion visits with (left) Alex Stepanovich and Ben Hartsock at lunch.



Courtesy photo

Soldiers from Fort Gordon serve on the flag crew to unfurl the 40-yard long Falcons flag moments before the kickoff Sept. 7.



Sgt. Maj. Thomas Clark, U.S. Army Signal Center Sergeant Major, prepares to take a picture of Spc. Hiram Ocasio, C. Co. 551st Signal Battalion with Falcon Cheerleaders.



Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Foley , U.S. Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon commanding general chats with lunch attendees to include Jerious Norwood, number 32 a running back for the Atlanta Falcons.